



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### **About...Mononucleosis Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV)**

##### **What is mononucleosis?**

Mononucleosis is a disease caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a member of the herpes virus group. Infections may go unrecognized in young children. In older children and young adults, clinical illness with the usual signs and symptoms are more common. The virus occurs worldwide, and most people become infected with EBV sometime during their lives. In the United States, as many as 95% of adults between 35 and 40 years of age have been infected. EBV establishes a lifelong dormant infection in some cells of the body's immune system. There are no known associations between active EBV infection and problems during pregnancy, such as miscarriages or birth defects.

##### **How is mononucleosis spread?**

Mononucleosis is spread by direct contact with the saliva of an infected person. Most individuals exposed to people with infectious mononucleosis have previously been infected with EBV and are not at risk for infectious mononucleosis. In addition, transmission of EBV requires intimate contact with the saliva (found in the mouth) of an infected person. Transmission of this virus through the air or blood does not normally occur.

##### **Who is at risk for mononucleosis?**

All people who have never been ill with mononucleosis are at risk of getting mononucleosis.

##### **How do I know if I have mononucleosis?**

Physicians use blood tests to diagnose mononucleosis in symptomatic individuals.

##### **What are the symptoms of mononucleosis?**

Symptoms can include fever, sore throat, swollen glands, and atypical lymphocytes in the blood. An enlarged spleen is also typical in cases among adolescents and young adults. Occasionally, infection may have a rash, which is more likely to occur in people treated with ampicillin. Fatigue lasting a few weeks may follow the infection. Complications may include aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or Guillian-Barre syndrome.

### **How is mononucleosis treated?**

There is no specific treatment for mononucleosis.

Some interventions to assist in relief of symptoms include:

- Get plenty of bed rest.
- Drink lots of water and fruit juices to relieve fever and prevent dehydration.
- Gargle with salt water to relieve sore throat.
- Consider over-the-counter pain relievers. Do not give aspirin to children under the age of 16 years.

Your healthcare provider instructions should be followed and they may ask that sports activities to be avoided for at least a month after symptoms have resolved because of the increased risk of a ruptured spleen and lack of energy.

### **How is mononucleosis prevented?**

Mononucleosis can be prevented by using respiratory etiquette, frequent hand washing, and by avoiding saliva sharing activities.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/ebv.htm>

Mononucleosis is not a reportable disease in Indiana so there are no communicable disease reports available for this disease.

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